

**Town of Webster
Office of Select Board
945 Battle Street
Webster, NH 03303
Final Minutes – July 5, 2016
Approved July 18, 2016**

Staff Present: Bruce Johnson, Nanci Schofield and Leslie Palmer

Public Present: Scott Swezey, Sarah Chalsma, George Cummings, Gordon Welch, Jon Pearson, Tara Gunnigle, Mike Schofield, John Clark, Roy Fanjoy, Emmett Bean, Jere Buckley, Betsy Janeway, Chris Schadler and Mike Jette

Chairman Johnson opened the meeting at 6:35 PM.

Chairman Johnson explained that the Select Board held a budget work session earlier in the day to review the budget to date and to conduct regular business prior to the regular session. He then read the following Board prepared statement regarding the Police Chief Recruitment process:

- 1. The Select Board originally posted a full-time position. As suggested by citizens of the town, the Select Board then created a Police Chief Search Committee to recommend full-time or part-time.*
- 2. The Committee voted 8-1 for full-time. It also recommended re-posting the position and creating a new advertisement. It also suggested that an Oral Board interview candidates.*
- 3. The Select Board followed those directives, re-posted the position with the new advertisement, interviewed all candidates, and formed an Oral Board. This Board consists of neighboring high ranking law enforcement officers with representation from Boscawen, Concord, Hopkinton, Merrimack County Sheriff's Department, the NH State Police and a Webster citizen. It is a group with a wealth of experience.*
- 4. The Oral Board interviewed the final candidates on June 23. The Board then recommended the Select Board focus on a part-time Chief.*
- 5. The Select Board has started to advertise for this position and is now actively soliciting candidates for a part-time Chief. We already have interest from highly qualified candidates. Application due date is July 22.*
- 6. The Oral Board will reconvene after July 22, review the applications, determine qualified candidates to interview, and approximately 4 potential candidates will be ranked and forwarded to the Select Board. We will take that information and determine how to proceed with interviews and will make a timely decision.*
- 7. It should be noted that the Select Board strongly feels we are moving in the right direction. We also hear that people want this issue resolved, and we are working towards a timely resolution.*
- 8. Finally, Town Counsel has advised that we say as little as possible. We will not answer any questions or take comments related to specific candidates. However, we feel it is important to share an update on the process. Please trust that your Select Board continues to work towards a resolution that will be the best decision for the Town.*

He also read the following statement on behalf of Selectman Borek who could not attend the meeting:

The Select Board has been working for months on the Police Chiefs position. I am anxious to hire a person for the Police Chief position as I feel the citizens of Webster are.

Recently, the board has created a Police Review Committee represented by the Police Chiefs of Hopkinton and Boscawen, Deputy Police Chief of Concord, the Merrimack Country Sheriff, Capitan of the State Police and a Webster resident. I feel this is an excellent group that is willing to help the Town of Webster to secure a good person for the position of Police Chief for the Town of Webster. This group felt, at this time, there was not a qualified full time candidate for the position and felt it was a good option to pursue a part time Police Chief. Also, the group felt we could potentially secure a very good person for the position at approximately the same rate as the last Police Chief of Webster.

I am very optimistic that we can attract, and hire, a part time Police Chief that will be qualified and meet the needs of the Town of Webster.

Please be patient as we continue the process to hire a well-qualified person for the Police Chief of Webster.

Chairman Johnson opened the meeting to Public Comment advising that the Board would not discuss individual candidates on the recommendation of Town Counsel.

- Scott Sweezey asked if all candidates interviewed by the Select Board were brought before the Oral Board. Chairman Johnson said no. When Mr. Sweezey remarked that personality conflicts seem to be dictating the Select Board's hiring decisions, both Chairman Johnson and Selectwoman Schofield reiterated that they could not discuss individual candidates on advice of Town Counsel.
- Sarah Chalsma asked for clarification regarding the decision to go from a full time to a part time Police Chief. Selectwoman Schofield explained that the recruitment for a full time Chief produced limited results. The Oral Board suggested that the salary offered to attract candidates for a full time position would have to be substantial and recommended recruiting for a part time Chief to attract high quality candidates. The Oral Board believes the part time position will attract retired Chiefs who will benefit the community with their knowledge and years of experience. Due to recent part time Police Chief recruitments in surrounding towns, there is already a pool of candidates interested and available. Selectwoman Schofield noted that it's important to have a Chief who will work well with surrounding communities and who will shape the department to get the coverage and skills needed and create a solid foundation for growth.
- George Cummings spoke as a member of the Police Chief Search Committee and noted that he was in favor of a part time Chief in the first place but was swayed into the full time recommendation by others on the Committee. He made three points in favor of the part time choice:
 1. Economy – A part time Chief already retired would cost the Town less and would not require a benefit package.
 2. The pool of qualified candidates is larger; there is more experience to draw from.
 3. Minimal Risk – The part time option provides minimal risk to the applicant; he asked who would take the risk to work full time for less money while wondering each year at Town Meeting if the budget will be cut or eliminated.The belief of the Committee was that the full time option was ideal but that plan B would be to recruit a part time Chief if it didn't work out.
- Gordon Welch referred to the past warrant article in which the Town voted for a full time Police Chief, asking the Select Board why it thinks it knows better than the voters in choosing to hire a part time Chief. Selectwoman Schofield responded that no, the Select Board does not think it knows better, it is following the recommendation of the Oral Board. Chairman Johnson clarified that the Select Board has the authority to hire and that the warrant article is advisory according to Town Counsel. Mr. Gordon asked for that statement to be put in writing; Chairman Johnson indicated that it would be in the minutes of this meeting. Chairman Johnson also reiterated that the Board followed through with the process recommended. Selectwoman Schofield explained that according to the Oral Board, a Sargent earns about \$70,000 annually and that the Town would have to offer a salary above this threshold to attract candidates for a full time position. She also clarified "part time" by noting a retired Chief could work up to 32 hours on average per week and overtime and/or compensatory time could not accrue.
- Jon Pearson spoke as a member of the Police Search Committee and stated that the Committee was told that the Town "illegally hired the part time Chief." He asked that the Select Board straighten up and fix its "mistake" and hire a full time Chief as voted.
- Tara Gunnigle believes that if the Town hires a full time Chief and has a full time Officer and a part time Officer (with no benefits) that the Town would be in good shape budget wise. She feels that the Town has gone off course and should get back on track with what the Town voted for. She also asked how a resident would know if an article is "advisory" only. Chairman Johnson indicated that he would seek clarification on that.
- Mike Schofield spoke as a member of the Police Search Committee and remarked that he was in favor of a full time Chief but noted that Webster does not have a favorable reputation in the law enforcement community. He believes that the Select Board is on the right track to find a qualified candidate and commended the Board for its work.
- Sarah Chalsma observed that statements such as "illegal" hiring should be kept out of the discussion unless there is actual proof and that it only adds to the Town's bad reputation. She stated that safety should be the top priority in choosing a Police Chief and will support the decision for a part time Chief if the Town can prove that safety will be maintained.
- John Clark spoke as the Chair of the Police Chief Committee and although he supports a full time Chief, he recommends that a part time Chief be locked into a three year contract to have time to get public trust back. He asked that the Town move forward and not live in the past.

- Roy Fanjoy referred to the study conducted by Don Gross several years ago in which he recommended a 20 hour part time Chief. Mr. Fanjoy noted that the hiring of a full time Chief is not going to happen today; past meetings that resulted in budget cuts and attempts to zero out the Police budget have divided the Town. He also observed that not every group will be pleased with the final choice for Chief and that the Select Board is in a no win situation and has received a lot of flak. A part time Chief can be hired now and make some positive changes. He expressed his appreciation for the Oral Board and thanked the Select Board for its work.
- Emmett Bean asked the Select Board if it was considering the locality of the candidate in its decision. The Board said the focus would be on local candidates.
- George Cummings noted that there is a benefit to a candidate living outside of the Town but close by.
- Mike Schofield said that the emphasis should be on the quality of the candidate. He noted that the law enforcement community is a small one and the fact that the Oral Board conducted interviews has sent a wave throughout; it has been noticed.
- Jere Buckley confessed that he was frustrated by the slow progress but having heard about the process tonight has made him realize that a lot has been going on behind the scenes. He is impressed with the qualifications of the Oral Board and feels that the Select Board is on a reasonable path to attract a strong pool of candidates by recruiting a part time Chief.
- Selectwoman Schofield emphasized that the Select Board ideally would like a full time Chief but a part time Chief now could build the community so that in a few years the Town could look into the full time option and continue to create unity and a safe and protected community.
- Scott Sweezey observed that it seems “shady” that not all candidates were brought before the Oral Board. Selectwoman Schofield clarified that every candidate was discussed with the Oral Board. Mr. Sweezey expressed appreciation for the Select Board’s work.
- Betsy Janeway commented that narrowing down a field of candidates for a second interview is common practice and feels the Select Board is doing a good job.
- Chris Schadler asked if the state has a ratio that could be used to determine what is needed for Police coverage. George Cummings responded that there really isn’t one as many factors go into decisions such as affordability and experience. John Clark responded that there is a standard of one officer for every 1,000 residents that is used, referring to the city of Concord as an example. Mr. Clark still believes a full time Chief is necessary but supports what the Town is doing, acknowledging that there is a lot of “minutia” in managing a part time position.
- Mike Schofield also acknowledged that it will take a lot of effort on the Select Board’s part to insure that a part time Chief is providing adequate coverage while at the same time complying with NH Retirement laws; policies will need to be reviewed.
- Mike Jette spoke as a member of the Police Search Committee and expressed appreciation for the both Boards’ time and energy in this process. He liked hearing the word “unity” and applauded the Select Board for taking it on, noting that healing and unity will take time. He also applauded the Board’s long term plan and thanked the Board for its work.

Chairman Johnson asked if anyone would like to speak on any other topics. There were no other speakers. Selectwoman Schofield referred to the Oral Board’s recommendation to hire a part time Chief to attract retired, experienced Chiefs and noted that it is a strategy that is working well for other Towns. Success depends on a department that works well together and with neighboring communities. Success also relies on the support of the Town. She expressed hope that the Town will come together and be supportive of the new Chief whether full time or part time. It’s important that residents feel safe and that they have someone they can count on. The Town needs to be unified.

At 7:28 PM, Chairman Johnson made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Selectwoman Schofield and approved.

Respectfully Submitted, Leslie M. Palmer